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CO-ORDINATION QUESTIONS

STRENGTHENING OF INTER-AGENCY CO-ORDINATION MECHANISMS RELATED TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

This report describes the various inter-agency co-ordination mechanisms related to the environment and UNEP's role in those mechanisms.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to take a decision along the following lines:

The Governing Council,

Having considered the report of the Executive Director on "Strengthening of Inter-Agency Co-ordination Mechanisms related to the Environment";

Recalling that, under General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII), one of the responsibilities of the environment secretariat is to co-ordinate, under the guidance of the Governing Council, environmental programmes within the United Nations system, to keep their implementation under review and to assess their effectiveness;

1. Considers that increased and strengthened inter-agency co-ordination in the field of the environment is essential if the United Nations system is to meet the serious environmental challenges of the 1990s;

2. Requests the Executive Director to establish a small specialized unit within the secretariat to deal with inter-agency co-ordination in the field of the environment, with a total cost of $750,000 during the biennium 1992-1993.

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STRENGTHENING OF INTER-AGENCY CO-ORDINATION MECHANISMS RELATED TO THE ENVIRONMENT

1. In 1972, the General Assembly in its resolution 2997 (XXVII), by which it established UNEP, the Governing Council, the Secretariat and the Environment Fund, also decided that "in order to provide for the most efficient co-ordination of United Nations environment programmes, an Environment Coordination Board under the Chairmanship of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme shall be established, under the auspices and within the framework of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination". Further, the Environment Co-ordination Board (ECB) was requested to report annually to the UNEP Governing Council. The ECB was assisted in its work by the focal points of all the agencies concerned, meeting regularly under the chairmanship of the Deputy Executive Director.

2. In 1977, when the economic and social sectors of the United Nations were restructured, the General Assembly, in resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977, decided that the ECB should be merged with the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) which should assume the ECB's functions, including the annual reporting to the Governing Council. 1/ The Governing Council, noting General Assembly resolution 32/197 on restructuring, stated in its decision 6/1, section II of 24 May 1978 that "the Executive Director of the Programme will assume responsibility for the preparatory process for the discharge by the Administrative Committee of these functions, in consultation as necessary with other interested executive heads" and "urges the Executive Director to ensure that the preparatory process ... involves appropriate consultations with designated officials of the members of the United Nations system". This marks the creation of the Designated Officials on Environmental Matters (DOEM), who replaced the ECB focal points and whose meetings are chaired by the Deputy Executive Director. The secretariat services for the DOEM, as for the ECB focal points, are provided by UNEP.

3. A main tool for co-ordinating the environmental aspects of United Nations programmes is the System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme (SWMTEP). The second such programme (1990-1995) was prepared by UNEP in consultation with all agencies, through the DOEM, and was approved by ACC before subsequent submission to and approval by the Governing Council in 1988. The DOEM should, according to ACC, have the responsibility for conducting a qualitative evaluation of SWMTEP. DOEM likewise plays a role in the development of UNEP's programme budget document, the two-year plan through which SWMTEP and the medium term plans of UNEP are implemented. Co-ordination through the DOEM takes the form of consultations, exchange of information on substantive issues, and specific collaboration through joint programming and thematic joint programming exercises between agencies concerned with a given area or problem.

1/ The ACC's reports to the Council, covering the years 1989 and 1990, are found in documents UNEP/GC.16/13 and UNEP/GC.16/12, respectively.

4. In order to facilitate the implementation of joint activities, a number of Memoranda of Understanding have been signed between UNEP and other United Nations bodies, spelling out the specific terms of co-operation. These Memoranda, when signed, have been brought to the attention of the Governing Council. 2/

5. A number of co-ordinating mechanisms in the field of the environment have been established under the ACC, and among agencies and organizations within and outside of the United Nations system, in order to ensure proper co-ordination of activities, maximum effectiveness of resources invested and best possible care for the environment.

6. UNEP participated in a number of such co-ordinating mechanisms under the ACC. The Inter-secretariat Group for Water Resources has been established to co-ordinate the activities of the United Nations system in the area of fresh water. All United Nations bodies, organizations and agencies have been invited to participate. Recently, the Group has focused on the co-ordination of efforts in the implementation of international programmes in the area of fresh water, such as the Mar del Plata Action Plan, and on preparations for the International Conference on Water, to be held in Dublin in January 1992. The outcome of this Conference is expected to be an important contribution to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In addition, proposals for a strategy for the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan in the 1990s are being prepared through the Inter-secretariat Group, addressing issues related to water for sustainable agricultural development, water quality, water resources assessment, drinking water supply and sanitation and water resources management.

7. UNEP is also participating in the Ad Hoc Inter-agency Group on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, established in 1983. The Group is open to all organizations of the United Nations system and secretariat services for it are provided by the office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation.

8. The Inter-agency Working Group on Desertification (IAWGD), for which UNEP serves as secretariat, was established to co-ordinate the implementation of the 1977 Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. The efforts of the United Nations system in the area of desertification, especially those of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office, UNDP, UNEP, Unesco and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), are co-ordinated within the IAWGD.

9. Co-ordination among agencies also takes place outside the direct framework of the ACC. Since UNEP established the Ecosystems Conservation Group (ECG) in 1975, the Group has provided a forum for co-operation and co-ordination among the major international organizations dealing with the problems of nature conservation and natural resource management and has helped to reduce duplication of effort. The ECG comprises UNEP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Unesco, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources IUCN), and the World-wide Fund for Nature (WWF), with UNDP, the World Bank,

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2/ The Governing Council at its sixteenth session has before it, in document UNEP/GC.16/Inf.3, several Memoranda of Understanding concluded between UNEP and other United Nations organs/agencies since the last regular session of the council in 1989.

the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources (IBPGR), and the World Resources Institute (WRI) invited as observers. UNEP continues to provide secretariat services. The Group's existence has helped to ensure a system-wide response in this area of the environment programme, thereby extending the catalytic role of UNEP.

10. Other co-ordination mechanisms are in the form of programmes, such as the International Programme on Chemical Safety, in which the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNEP currently participate. Efforts are being made to bring in FAO as a participating organization.

11. In the area of monitoring, there are several co-ordinating programmes and UNEP plays a major role in them. The Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS) within the Earthwatch of UNEP is a collective effort of the world community to acquire, through monitoring and assessment, the data and information needed for rational management of the environment. The World Climate Programme (WCP) is the major programme in the United Nations system for research in and monitoring of climatic developments and changes. It consists of four components, involving WMO, UNEP, FAO, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of Unesco and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU). UNEP is responsible for the implementation of one of the four components, namely the World Climate Impact Programme (WCIP). The overall co-ordination of WCP rests with WMO. The programme is currently under review, and may be restructured in light of the outcome of the Second World Climate Conference, held in November 1990.

12. Recognizing the importance of the issue of climate change, in 1989 the ACC created a special task force, at the level of executive heads, to monitor and co-ordinate climate change issues as necessary and appropriate. The special task force met twice in 1990, in February and November.

13. The International Environmental Education Programme (IEEP) was jointly created by Unesco and UNEP in 1975 and is implemented mainly by Unesco for UNEP. An inter-secretariat committee for IEEP has been established at the Assistant Director-General/Assitant Executive Director level, to co-ordinate and guide the Progamme.

14. In an environment and development context the area of financing has recently received much attention. As early as 1980, the Committee on International Development Institutions on the Environment (CIDIE) was created, with UNEP serving as the secretariat. CIDIE now has 16 members, including major financing insitutions (the World Bank, regional development banks, UNDP and the International Fund for Agricultural Development) and other agencies whose work has significant environmental impacts in a developmental context (FAO, the World Food Programme). The major focus of CIDIE has been on co-ordination and the integration of environmental considerations into development planning.

15. More recently, in light of international legal agreements, financial considerations have been in terms of costs to developing countries of complying with such instruments. As a consequence, an Interim Multilateral Ozone Fund has been established under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Fund was created by decision of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, and the Executive Director of UNEP was invited to establish the Fund and appoint its secretariat. Co-operation with other agencies in the operation of the Fund will be important.

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16. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has been established as a major funding initiative by the World Bank, in co-operation with UNDP and UNEP. The aim is to provide assistance to developing countries to ensure environmentally sound development in four principal areas: climate change, biological diversity, protection of the ozone layer, and international waters. A well-defined relationship between the Interim Multilateral Ozone Fund and the GEF has been developed. The GEF is to become operational by May 1991.

17. UNEP's catalytic and co-ordinating role is not confined exclusively to the United Nations system, but also other intergovernmental bodies such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Economic Community (EEC), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). In recent years, all these organizations have placed the environment high on their agendas and, as regards their initiatives and capacities at the regional level and the efforts and priorities of UNEP and the United Nations system at the global level, much can be gained by effective co-ordination with their secretariats.

18. In 1985, the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) set up a co-operative programme for the environment. Several subcommittees were established to look into specific problems such as water resources and land degradation and desertification. The programme was established in co-operation with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and OAU. UNEP has provided secretariat services.

19. Other co-operation programmes have been drawn up in other regions, in collaboration with Governments and the regional economic commissions. The Latin American Action Plan was recently signed by ministers from Latin America and the Caribbean, and it will be implemented in co-operation with UNEP, UNDP, Inter-American Development Bank, and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Likewise, programmes of co-operation have been agreed between UNEP and the Economic and Social Commissions for Western Asia and for Asia and the Pacific, respectively. In addition, UNEP serves as or makes provisions for the secretariats for 10 regional seas conventions, which are intergovernmental legal instruments, but which require co-ordination between agencies in the implementation of the programmes and activities.

20. In its decision 15/15, the Governing Council welcomed the intention of the Executive Director to develop closer working relationships with the United Nations regional commissions, as well as with the World Bank and UNDP.

21. The co-ordinating mechanisms mentioned above are necessary and have all proven themselves useful. However, there is little doubt that yet more effective co-ordination is needed, and could be achieved if staffing is strengthened and more resources are made available. Several agencies have indicated that UNEP should maintain a service function for other agencies with respect to a number of co-ordination mechanisms in environmental matters. In UNEP's programme budget document for 1992-1993 3/ it is proposed that at

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3/ UNEP/GC.16/15.

least 30 per cent of the Environment Fund should be approriated to inter-agency co-operation. In addition, 13 per cent of the funds are set aside for regional and technical co-operation. With this added emphasis on co-operative activities, the Governing Council is requested to support the proposal that adequate financial resources be set aside in the next biennium to ensure that UNEP can fulfil this goal and ensure the provision of the best services to the co-ordinating bodies to allow them to carry out their important responsibilities.

22. With these goals in mind, the Executive Director suggests that a small specialized unit be established within the UNEP secretariat to work, in close co-operation with other offices within UNEP and with other agencies, on co-ordination measures. The unit would be composed of two redeployed senior Professionals (P4/5) and their support staff, strengthened by two Professionals at the P3 level and two support staff. The additional staff costs for the biennium would be approximately $325,000. Further, the Executive Director proposes that resources totalling $425,000 be budgeted for the biennium for informal meetings of representatives of the co-ordination bodies for which UNEP provides secretariat services (DOEM, CIDIE, ECG) and for preparations for meetings of the co-ordinating bodies themselves. Thus, the total proposed cost of the unit during the biennium 1992-1993 would be $750,000. The unit would be financed through programme and programme support costs, within the limit established by the Governing Council, or through contributions from approved individual budget lines of the Programme.